

St. Louis Bird Club Bulletin

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SAINT LOUIS BIRD CLUB

for the
ENJOYMENT, STUDY, AND CONSERVATION OF BIRDS

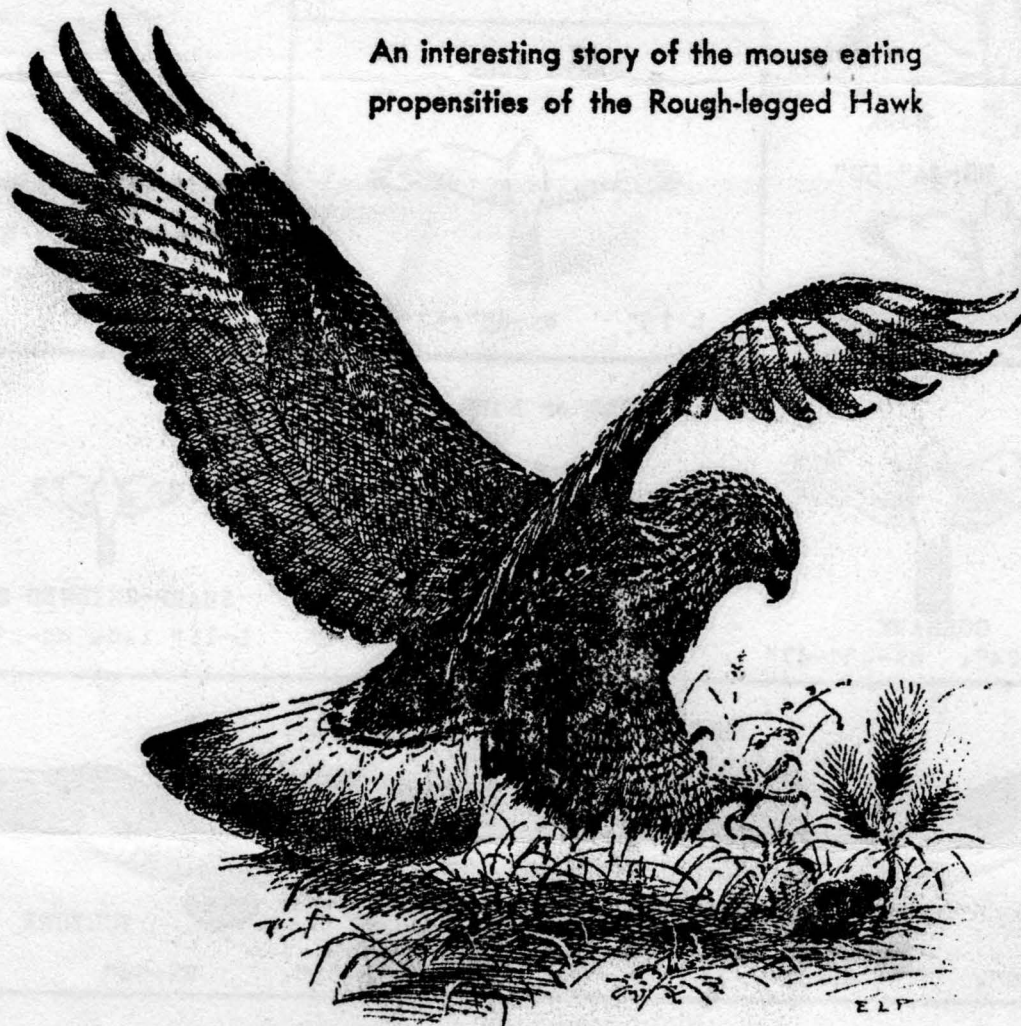
VOLUME 6

FEBRUARY-MARCH 1937

NO. II & III

ENTER HAWK—EXIT MOUSE

An interesting story of the mouse eating
propensities of the Rough-legged Hawk



The Rough-leg, arch-enemy of meadow mice.

HAWKS AND PESTS

In 1928 the city of Reading acquired a tract of about 3,500 acres along the course of the Maiden Creek in Berks County, as a site for an impounding dam. In this area, during the next few years, about 2,500,000 seedling Red and Scotch pines were planted, so that now a promising young forest surrounds the recently completed lake which furnishes Reading with its water supply.

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BIRDBANDERS

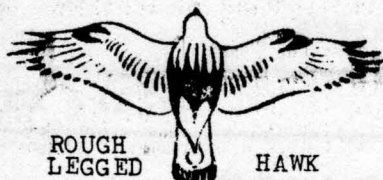
What do we do? It's simple. We capture live birds. Then we affix to their legs a regulation aluminum band, and let the bird go. The band carries a serial number. That number, the date, place and species are recorded. When a fellow bander recaptures the bird, or discovers its body, he reports the data to the address on the band--the U. S. Biological Survey at Washington, D. C.

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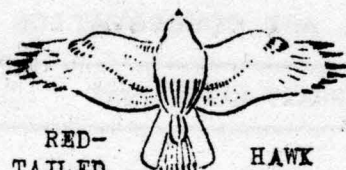
EASTERN HAWKS -- What They Look Like In The Air

(All Bird Illustrations by Courtesy of the National Ass'n. of Audubon Societies)

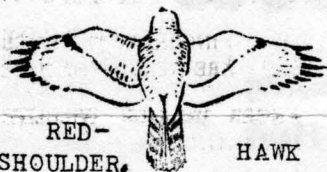
BROAD-WINGED or MOUSE HAWKS



ROUGH
LEGGED HAWK
L-20"-22". WS-56"-60"



RED-
TAILED HAWK
L-22"-24". WS-50"-56"

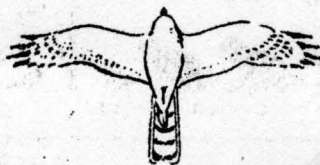


RED-
SHOULDER. HAWK
L-20"-22". WS-44"-50"



BROAD-
WINGED HAWK
L-14"-18". WS-33"-38"

MARSH HAWK



L-19" WS-45"-52"

POINTED-WING FALCONS



DUCK HAWK
L-18"-19". WS-40"-46"

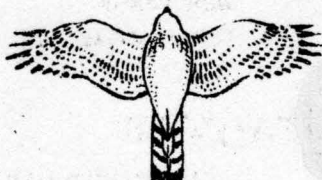


PIGEON HAWK
L-11"-13". WS-14"-20"



SPARROW HAWK
L-11". WS-9"-14"

SHORT WINGED or BIRD HAWKS



GOSHAWK
L-22"-24". WS-43"-47"



COOPER'S HAWK
L-18"-20". WS-30"-36"

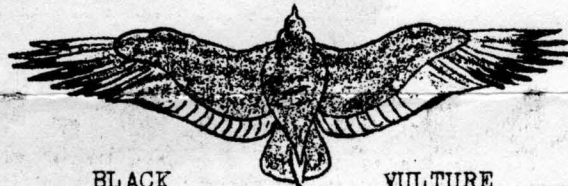


SHARP-SHINNED HAWK
L-11" 14". WS-23"-27"

SMALL-HEADED or CARRION BIRDS

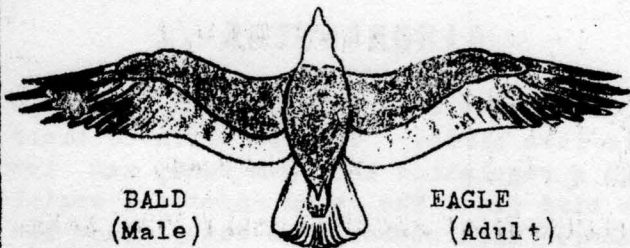


TURKEY VULTURE
L-30". WS-72"



BLACK VULTURE
L-27". WS-54"

WHITE-HEADED or WATER-FREQUENTING BIRDS



BALD
(Male)
L-30"-35".
WS-78"-87". (Female)
L-34"-43"
WS-88"-93"

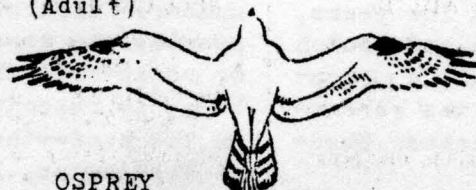
EAGLE
(Adult)



BALD

EAGLE
(Immature)

L-30"-35". WS-78"-93"



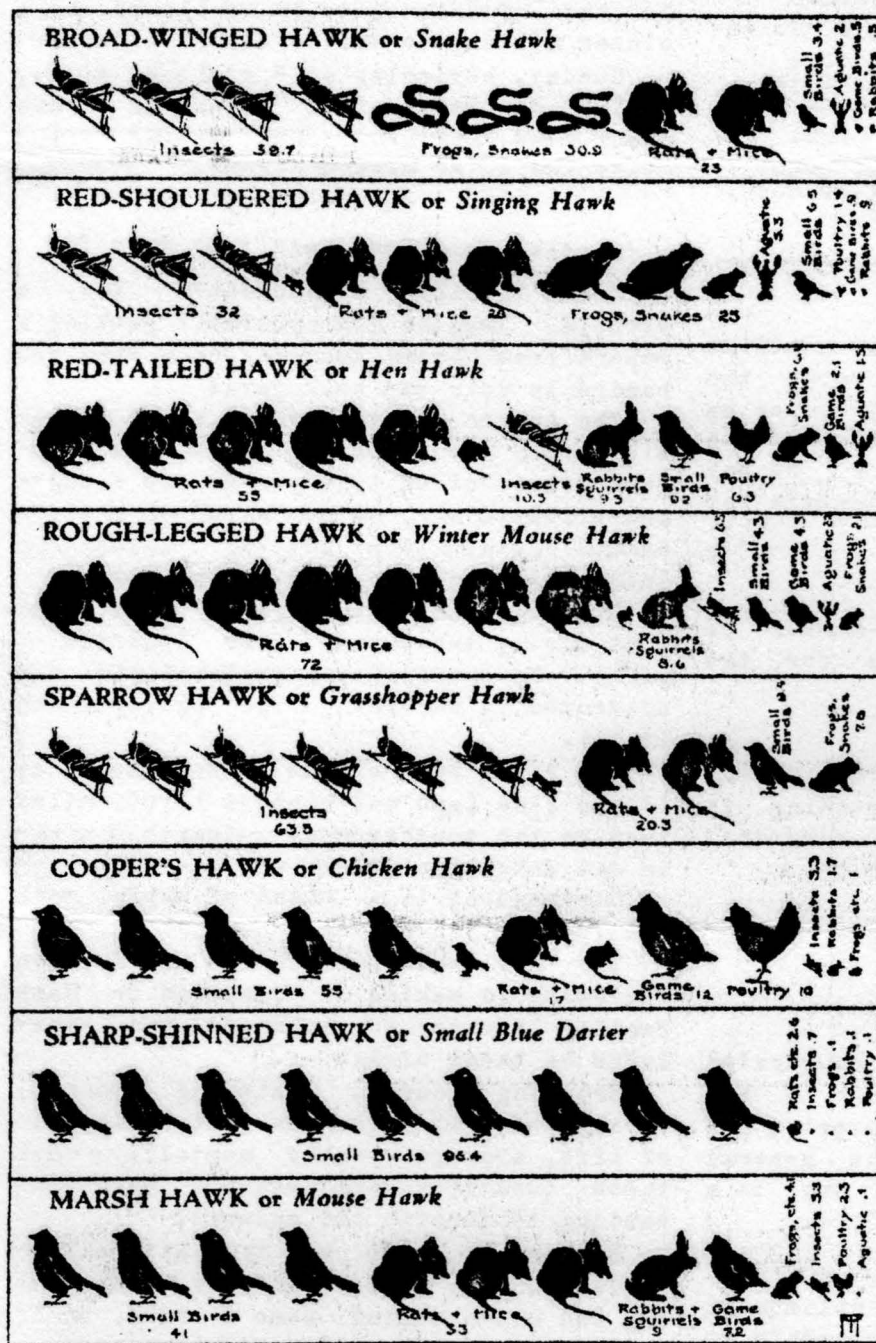
OSPREY
L-24". WS-54"-66".

WHAT HAWKS EAT

OUR WILDLIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS. USE GOOD JUDGMENT.

Nature has a place and a need for every Native Hawk. They are all part of our wildlife, and each plays an essential part in regulating the abundance of the animals on which they prey.

The following charts show graphically the average food preference of each kind of Hawk that occurs commonly in eastern North America, based on studies by scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, covering the contents of 5,185 hawk stomachs. Every other food habit investigation has amply confirmed these studies. They can be said to represent facts established so carefully as to admit of no possible contradiction. (See U.S.D.A. Circular No. 370, "Food Habits of Common Hawks," published 1935. price 5c, from Supt. of Documents, Washington, D. C.)



KNOW YOUR HAWKS

TRY TO INCREASE THE ONES THAT ARE NEEDED TO HELP US PRESERVE HEALTHY BALANCES IN OUR WILDLIFE POPULATIONS.

MOUSE HAWKS

SOARING IN CIRCLES
PERCHING IN OPEN
LARGE SIZE
TAMENESS
SLOW FLIGHT
WIDE WINGS
SHORT, BROAD TAIL

FALCONS

LONG, POINTED WINGS
STREAMLINED SHAPE
RAPID FLIGHT
DEEP WING STROKE

BIRD HAWKS

ALTERNATING FLAP AND GLIDE FLIGHT
PERCHING UNDER COVER
DIRECT RAPID PURSUIT
LONG TAIL
SMALLISH SIZE
SHORT, BLUNT WINGS

MARSH HAWK

LOW COURSING FLIGHT
LONG WINGS AND TAIL
HIGH WING ANGLE

SPECIES WITH SIMPLE FEEDING HABITS:

VULTURES — These useful scavengers eat only dead animals.
BALD EAGLE — Our National Emblem, eats carrion, fish, and such crippled and sick birds and mammals as it is able to catch with its slow flight.
OSPREY — Eats fish, chiefly non-commercial kinds, that swim near the surface.

SPECIES THAT ARE GENERALLY VERY RARE:

GOSHAWK — A northern Hawk, coming south only in certain years. Eats poultry, game, rabbits, squirrels and mice.
DUCK HAWK — Eats shore birds, sparrows, and other non-game birds. Now very rare. Don't shoot it!
PIGEON HAWK — Eats small birds and insects. Is never common, and is too small to harm game.

SAINT LOUIS BIRD CLUB BULLETIN..

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The monthly Bulletin serves as a medium for announcements and news concerning the activities of the Club; also articles on bird-life, bird-banding and conservation are included, as well as news of recent books that have to do with interests of ornithology.

It is the privilege of each member of the Club to contribute articles for the Bulletin.

Support from the club membership for making the Bulletin more interesting is sadly lacking. Let's have more support.

The next issue will cover B.B.H.

The new streamlined heads inaugurated in the January Bulletin have made a big hit with its readers. The comments are too numerous to publish but the general opinion is that it points the way to a real future.

Some of our members are now delinquent in their dues. Bring your membership up to date so that we can keep you on our mailing list.

Support Senate Bill 136 and save our Hawks and Owls. This bill will be introduced in the State Senate by Senator Don-eley of Lebanon.

AUDUBON MEETING

The Audubon Society of Missouri will hold its spring meeting at St. Louis on Saturday and Sunday, April 24 and 25.

The opening session Saturday morning will be a joint meeting with the Biology Section of the Missouri Academy of Science at Washington University. A trip to the Tropical Bird House is scheduled for the afternoon, to be followed by a dinner meeting at the Forest Park Hotel.

Sunday, beginning at 5 o'clock A. M., will be devoted to bird trips to Creve Coeur Lake, Marias Croché, Marias Tempe Clair and other marshy places.

(Birdbanders--continued from Page 7)

Fun? Thrill? Excitement? Yes, a plenty! Imagine you yourself getting a report from South America on a bird you banded in your own back yard!

The bander gathers facts about migration which are essential for an intelligent conservation policy. We are a cog--and a little one, to be sure--in a widespread organization getting scientific information for the good of society.

Evening Grosbeaks migrate East and West during the summer over hundreds of miles. No professional ornithologist had suspected it before. The bander found it out.

The Artic Tern breeds as far North as it can find land and winters 11,000 miles away on the southernmost outparts of within the Antarctic Circle.

Birdbanding is a blend of useful work and fascinating recreation.

The National Association of Audubon Societies is making a campaign on Hawk banding in order to increase our knowledge of these birds.

Breeding grounds, wintering grounds, spring and fall migration routes, length-of life, average yearly mortality--all these questions are awaiting more Hawk banding to furnish the answers.

Richard H. Pough of the National Association will send bands for Hawks to any one who can find some to band, or if you will send your information, where a nest of Hawks can be found, to the St. Louis Bird Club, we will see that they get banded.

This is a chance for the amateur bird man to help advance a branch of ornithological knowledge through co-operative effort.

RIPLETTES

The Dorking fowl is abnormal in having more than four toes.

The first known nest of the Black-throated Blue Warbler was discovered by John Burroughs July, 1871, in Delaware County, New York.

The Giant Moas (extinct birds of New Zealand) reached a height of ten to eleven feet.

A comparison of wing segments shows the upper arm to be the longest in the divers, the forearm to be the longest in the Gulls, and the hand section of the wing to be the longest unit in the Penguins.

Lucy's Warbler is described as the smallest of the family Mniotiltidae and the only one smaller than the kinglets.

A Cassowary has been known to swallow as much as a quart of stones (gizzard stones) in one day. It can swallow a pebble twice as large as a hen's egg.

Science tells us that birds descended from a lizard-like ancestor.

White is never a pigment in feathers, but is due to innumerable air spaces in the feather substance which reflects the light rays.

NEW BOOKS

"Adventures in Bird Protection," an Autobiography by T. Gilbert Pearson. This book will be off the press on March 12. Dr. Pearson is the father of bird protection in the United States. He is one of the few remaining persons who have devoted a lifetime to conservation. It is fortunate for the country that Dr. Pearson has decided to issue this autobiography. He is now engaged in international conservation work, another pioneer job.

"Wildlife for the Future" and "The Dollar in the Ducks" are the titles of two booklets recently issued by the American Wildlife Institute with headquarters in the Investment Building, Washington, D. C. Both of these are beautifully conceived physically and carefully written and edited. Both are presented from the viewpoint of the sportsman, and designed for the intelligent, including business men who have a stake in the revenues derived from hunting and fishing.

(Hawks and Pests--continued from Page 7)

Much of this land was formerly devoted to agricultural purposes, perhaps the greater area having been given over to the raising of grain or to grazing. The former meadows were naturally covered with a luxurious growth of grass and supported the usual large population of meadow mice.

Today, between the infant pines, the former meadows have developed into weedy tangles that form ideal retreats for all sorts of small creatures of the neighborhood, and in addition to the mice, support a large population of rabbits, ringneck pheasants, skunks, groundhogs and weasels. These in turn have attracted a following, particularly during the colder half of the year, of the Birds of Prey that find the broad landscape, now nearly denuded of older trees, a productive hunting ground.

The fact that hundreds of pheasants and probably thousands of rabbits have been captured in this territory and distributed to sportsmen throughout the country is an interesting illustration of what may happen to game in a restricted region in which hunting is not permitted, and nature is allowed to maintain its own balance.

From October until late April, anyone standing in some favorable spot on this watershed could certainly see with the aid of binoculars here and there on the few taller trees that remain in the area, or coursing over the young plantation at least half a dozen of the various species of Hawks that have found the watershed a haven of refuge and bountiful source of their favorite food supply--the common meadow mouse, *Microtus Pennsylvanicus*.

At night the Owls take over the self-imposed task of the Hawks, and sweep over the meadows throughout the hours of darkness. Often during the day I have flushed flocks, up to sixteen in number, of the increasingly scarce Short-eared Owls, as they rested in some patch of weeds, and still oftener have I come upon the pellets cast up by these nocturnal hunters. Being interested in mammalogy, and having learned by experience that these winged nimrods have a way of occasionally turning up rare and little known species of small mammals, I have always made a practice of collecting the pellets regurgitated by these Owls, and by the Barn Owls which hunt over the same meadows.

(Turn to Page 12)

(Hawks and Pests--from Page 11)

In the course of years I should judge that I have examined well into the thousands of these pellets and have always found the skulls and fur of *Microtus* to form at least 95% of their bulk. As to the Hawks, an interesting opportunity to estimate their function in an area of this sort came in the winter of 1934-35, when one of the local deputies, who happened to be trapping Pheasants on the area for distribution, took it upon himself to shoot as many Hawks as possible. These were later turned over to, or acquired by the Reading Museum, and the stomach contents examined.

The winter in question was remembered for the comparative abundance of Rough-legged Hawks, which had previously become quite rare in this part of the country. As these large Hawks come from the far North, where they have few opportunities to come in contact with humans, they are usually unsuspicious, and form tempting targets, so that a number of them found their way into the Museum's collection before the matter came to my attention, and on checking over the stomach contents I found that every one contained meadow mice exclusively.

A short time before this the city forester brought a number of girdled pines to me and sought information as to the cause of this high mortality rate among the young trees. I accompanied him to the watershed, and noticed that an appalling number of the infant trees had been girdled by meadow mice, most of the work having evidently been done under cover of snow.

In some areas there was an abundance of ground cover, the proportion of loss must have been upwards of 40%, and in certain spots practically every tree over a radius of 100 feet had been completely girdled close to the ground, and consequently killed.

After a survey of these conditions, it was not difficult to convince the head of the water bureau that what was needed on the area was not less Hawks, but more Hawks, and orders were given that no more shooting of Birds of Prey was to be permitted.

Blind partisanship and such statements as "the only good Hawk is a dead Hawk", achieve nothing.

There have been sufficient data gathered by the Department of Agriculture and the various State investigations, such as ours in Pennsylvania, to make the actual feeding habits of the Hawks and Owls no longer a matter of conjecture but of actual knowledge.

The fact that Ringneck Pheasants and rabbits are more abundant on the area which I have described, than in any equal area with which I am familiar, amply demonstrates that the six species of Hawks and Owls most abundant on the area, namely the Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, Rough-legged, Marsh and Sparrow Hawks, and the Barn and Short-eared Owls, will pay little attention to anything else, so long as their natural food, the meadow mouse, is abundant and easily obtained. --Earl L. Poole in the Pennsylvania Game News.

SPRING BIRD WALKS

Spring bird walks will be conducted as usual in the city parks during April.

Bird walks in Forest Park will begin April 3.

Walks in Shaw's Garden will leave, Flora and Tower Grove Avenues at 6 A.M. every Saturday.

Walks in Bellefontaine Cemetery will leave the Florissant Avenue entrance every Saturday morning at 6 o'clock.

LET'S MAKE ST. LOUIS BIRD-CONSCIOUS

Double the membership! Reach out after that friend of yours who is just about to be interested. Every birder knows how much wider his world is because of his favorite sport. Why not share the pleasure with others? Let them know the lift of those half hours in the park after work, and the good long mornings in the field. Other cities are garden-conscious and healthier for it. Let's make St. Louis bird-conscious.

Let's show Mr. and Mrs. John Citizen the beauty we already own in our city bird-life. And then....sign them up for membership! It will mean a better Bulletin and a better future for the birds.

WATCH FOR B. B. H. NEXT ISSUE!